

Fieldwork Ethics and Comparative Research Methods

ANTH 3500 (4 credits)

International Honors Program (IHP) Climate Change: *The Politics of Land, Water and Energy Justice*

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description

This course will support students in developing their own comparative research project to explore the politics of food, water and/or energy in relation to climate change across at least two program countries. It will give students an introduction to the qualitative research methods that social scientists have developed for their empirical investigations. Its main goals are first, to learn how to use research methods, primarily interviewing, participant observation and comparative analysis; and second, to encourage critical thinking about the research design and implementation. This includes matching methods to research questions, being aware of and managing our biases and assumptions, understanding how the research process and the identity of research participants influence the data we gather, and comprehending ethical dilemmas raised by fieldwork.

Research is a political enterprise, which raises concerns of academia's institutional legacy of power, colonialism, gender, sexuality, and race. Just as our inquiries into political economy, political ecology and environmental history require fundamental analytical questions, such as "for whom? by whom? about whom? for what purpose? and with what effects?," as researchers we must also turn our analysis inward and reflect on our own positionality, actions, and impacts. In the words of former IHP faculty Maria Jose Bermeo, "today, research and advocacy continue to play a role in framing specific communities within stereotypes, limiting the nuance of their given context, taking over their exercise of voice and agency in self-representation and assuming ownership of their ways of knowing. Thus, the practice of knowledge-making is rife with both possibilities and risks." Researchers must negotiate the ethics and responsibilities in the creation, use, and dissemination of the knowledge we produce.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Become more observant of the world and more attuned to one's place in it.
- Introduce students to various qualitative research methodologies, tools for field-based research, and their application.
- Introduce students to the problematic power dynamics in research (academic research's histories of exploitation); and consider ethics and responsibilities in field research.
- Engage in non-individualistic modes of research and fieldwork support.
- Introduce students to research proposal formulation and writing.
- Assemble research into a presentable format for contributing knowledge to the wider literature.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English

Instructional Methods

SIT's teaching and learning philosophy is grounded in the experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984; 2015) and informed by various scholars, such as Dewey, Piaget, Lewin, among others. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning is an active process that is not confined to the formal curriculum; "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 2015, p. 49). Learning involves both content and process. Learning is holistic and happens through various life experiences upon which students draw to generate new ways of knowing and being. Learning involves a community and is a lifelong endeavor. Learning is transformational. The suggested four step-cycle of a *concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation* embedded in the experiential learning model is not linear and might not always happen in that specific order, as any learning is highly context dependent. These stages of taking part in a shared experience; reflecting on that experience by describing and interpreting it; challenging their own assumptions and beliefs to generate new knowledge; and ultimately applying new knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes in a variety of situations and contexts are important for students to engage in to become empowered lifelong learners.

Course Schedule

**Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs*

SESSIONS' SUMMARY

1. Introduction to Fieldwork & Research Ethics
2. Introduction to Fieldwork
3. Conceiving your research: topics, questions, problems
4. Conversations & Participant Observation
5. Mapping & Actor Mapping; Collective Fieldwork Presentation
6. Engaging sources
7. Reflection & Analysis
8. Mid-term Presentations
9. Building Strong Arguments
10. Writing & Presenting Research
11. Final Presentations

Session 1: Introduction to Fieldwork & Research Ethics

Required Reading:

1. SIT Human Subject Research Guidelines and Policy.
2. SIT Study Abroad Policy on Ethics (adapted from the American Anthropological Association)
3. Alcoff, Linda. 1991-1992. "The Problem of Speaking for Others." *Cultural Critique* 20: 5-32.
4. Sultana, Farhana. 2007. "Reflexivity, Positionality and Participatory Ethics: Negotiating Fieldwork Dilemmas in International Research." *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 6(3): 374-385.

5. Saffran, Lise. "Students Abroad: First, Do No Harm with Your Camera," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 6, 2015. Also attached satires by Reductress and The Onion.

Recommended readings:

6. Tuhiwai Smith, Linda. 2006. "Chapter 1: Imperialism, History, Writing and Theory." In *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, pp. 26-35. London: Zed Books.
7. Rodríguez, Majandra. "Notes for civil society organizing against the climate crisis". <https://350.org/facing-climate-change-through-justice-and-intersectionality/>

Session 2: Introduction to Fieldwork

Required Reading:

1. Emerson, Robert M. et al. 1995. "Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research", *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, pp. 1-15. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
2. Sunstein, Bonnie and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater. 2007. "Double-entry notes" in *Fieldworking: Reading and Writing Research*. St. Martin Press. pp. 84-108.

Recommended readings:

3. Booth, Wayne C. et al. 2008. "Prologue," pp. 3-8; "Thinking in Print: The Uses of Research, Public and Private," pp.9-15; and "Ethics of Research," pp. 273-276. In *The Craft of Research* (3rd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
4. Thorne, Barrie. 1980. "You Still Takin' Notes?" *Fieldwork and Problems of Informed Consent.* *Social Problems* 27(3): 284-297.

Session 3: Conceiving your research: topics, questions, problems

Required Reading:

1. *The Craft of Research*, Chapter 2: "Connecting with Your Reader," "Asking Questions, Finding Answers," "Prologue—Planning Your Research—An Overview," Chapter 3: "From Topics to Questions" and Chapter 4: "From Questions to Problems," pp. 16-67.
2. Harding, Sandra. 1987. "Introduction: Is there a feminist method?" pp. 1-14; "Conclusion: Epistemological Questions," pp. 181-189. In *Feminism and Methodology*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Recommended readings:

3. Glesne, Corrine. 2011. "Chapter 1: Meeting Qualitative Inquiry." In *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (4th ed.), pp. 1-20. Boston: Pearson.

Session 4: Conversations & Participant Observation

Required Reading:

1. Jorgensen, Danny. 1989. "The Methodology of Participant Observation." In *Participant Observation*, pp.12-24. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
2. Patton, Michael Quinn. 2002. Chapter 7: "Qualitative Interviewing," pp. 339-427. *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Recommended readings:

3. Anderson, Kathryn & Jack, Dana, C. 1991. "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analysis." In S.B. Gluck and D. Patai (eds) *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, pp. 11-26. New York: Routledge.

Session 5: Mapping & Actor Mapping; Collective Fieldwork Presentation

Required Reading:

1. Sunstein, Bonnie and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater. 2007. "Learning how to look: mapping space" *Fieldworking: reading and writing research*. St. Martin Press. pp.194-205.

Recommended readings:

2. Lynch, Kevin. 1960, "The city image and its elements." in *The image of the city*. Cambridge, MA: MIT. pp 98-102.
3. Solnit, Rebecca. 2010. *Infinite City: A San Francisco Atlas*. UC Press.

Session 6: Engaging Resources

Required Reading:

1. Barrientos, Stephanie. 1998. "How to Do A Literature Study," pp. 87-106, A. Thomas, J. Chataway & M. Wuyts (eds), *Finding Out Fast: Investigative Skills for Policy and Development*. The Open University.
2. O'Laughlin, Bridget. 1998. "Interpreting Institutional Discourses," pp. 107-126. A. Thomas, J. Chataway & M. Wuyts (eds), *Finding Out Fast: Investigative Skills for Policy and Development*. The Open University.

Recommended readings:

3. Booth, Wayne C. et al. 2008. *The Craft of Research*, Chapter 6: "Engaging Resources," pp. 84-100.

Session 7: Reflection & Analysis

Required Reading:

1. Emerson, Robert M. et al. 1995. "Processing Fieldnotes: Coding and Memoing." In *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, pp. 142-168. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
2. Skocpol, Theda & Somers, Margaret. 1980. "The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry." *Comparative Studies in History and Society* 22(2): 174-197.

Recommended readings:

3. Patton, Michael Quinn. 2002. Chapter 8: "Qualitative Analysis and Interpretation," pp. 462-480. *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Session 8: Presentations: Mid-term

Session 9: Building Strong Arguments

Required Reading:

1. Booth, Wayne C. et al. 2008. *The Craft of Research*, Chapter 2: "Connecting with Your Reader," "Asking Questions, Finding Answers," "Prologue—Planning Your Research—An Overview," Chapter 3: "From Topics to Questions" and Chapter 4: "From Questions to Problems," pp. 16-67. all of Part III, "Making a Claim and Supporting It," 103-170. Chapter 7: Making Good Arguments: An Overview," Chapter 8: "Making Claims," Chapter 9: "Assembling Reasons and Evidence," Chapter 10: "Acknowledgements and Responses," Chapter 11: "Warrants."

Recommended readings:

2. Weston, Anthony. 2009. *A rulebook for arguments*. Hackett Publishing, pp xi-17.

Session 10: Writing & Presenting Research

Required Reading:

1. Booth, Wayne C. et al. 2008. *The Craft of Research*, all of Part IV, “Planning, Drafting and Revising,” 103-170. Chapter 12: “Planning,” Chapter 13: “Drafting Your Report,” Chapter 14: “Revising Your Organization and Argument,” Chapter 15: “Communicating Evidence Visually,” Chapter 16: “Introductions and Conclusions” and Chapter 17: “Revising Style: Telling Your Story Clearly”.

Recommended reading:

2. <http://datavisualization.ch/>
3. <https://gapminder.org/>
4. <http://informationisbeautiful.net/>
5. <http://visualisingdata.com>

Session 11: Presentations: Final

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

Research Proposal (5%) and Research Plan (5%)

You will submit a proposal for the research paper. The proposal will introduce issues you plan on addressing in your project and their impact and relevance to our program. It should explain why your topic is a good fit for a program examining issues of climate justice comparatively across multiple locations. It is understood that your research will evolve over the semester, and the proposal is not set in stone. Nonetheless, we want to begin to focus early, and refocus often, to take advantage of experiences offered by country programs as they unfold.

Research Proposal: 1 page (or less), comprised of these elements:

1. a paragraph that describes as specifically as possible what you intend to study;
2. embedded within the first paragraph you must include a thesis question or statement of what you are actually going to research; and
3. a second paragraph that describes why you believe the topic is important or relevant.
4. a list of about 3 to 5 keywords that encapsulate your topic (and any potential fields or sub-disciplines in which you might situate your project).

Research Plan: 3-4 pages, comprised of these major components:

1. a restatement of your initial proposal (this can be similar to your proposal, or a revised version of your first submission if you have changed or adjusted your topic);
2. a research plan that considers:
 - 2a. the kinds of evidence you may need to be able to answer your research question, and with that,
 - 2b. the kinds of methods you might use to acquire the necessary evidence; and
3. a list of about 10 sources you may use for your research. These sources must be academic—books and journal articles—websites are not acceptable sources per se; the list should be in a bibliographic format according to an accepted style guideline (it doesn't matter

which one you use, just be consistent—Chicago, MLA, APA, etc.). With each listed source, briefly annotate (a single sentence or just a few words) how this source might be useful.

Review of the Fieldwork Portfolio (5%)

One of the most important aspects of your research will be the informal **fieldwork portfolio** you maintain throughout the course. Your portfolio, comprised of your fieldwork notebook as well as any other materials you may collect (including digitally, such as photos, readings, etc.) will be the primary place where you gather evidence and begin reflective and analytic processing toward your research project. Your notebook might be comprised of notes from relevant class and site visits, conversations you have with people throughout your time on program (both paraphrasing as well as apropos quotes), observations, and journal-style processing of experiences in the homestay or anywhere else on the program; together, these will provide the ethnographic material that you will analyze in your final comparative paper and will provide the most original data from which you will draw. Throughout the semester you will have the opportunity to attend site-visits and lectures that may pertain directly or indirectly to your topic. You might also find yourself making observations about your daily experiences – remember that your topic may come up in unexpected moments and forms: a poster on the street, a passing conversation, a moment of culture clash – so make sure to capture these as well as you might in maintaining a journal. Your notebook might also be a place for you to work out questions and frustrations, consider new methods and ideas, reflect on the ethics of a situation or your changing ideas, fine-tune and narrow your project and more deeply engage in the places we visit.

You will periodically consult with program faculty on progress—or sticking points—in your research work. Office hours will be announced as the program schedule permits, but you are also encouraged to approach faculty informally to discuss whenever possible—make use of wait times in airports or on public transportation. Toward these meetings, bring your portfolio as this allows the faculty member to look more holistically at your process and advise you.

A portfolio review will be set by the faculty, on a rolling basis, toward the end of the California schedule. This will serve as a check on your overall progress and count as the Review of the Fieldwork Portfolio.

Collective Fieldwork Presentation (20%)

We will conduct fieldwork in teams for selected sites during the California and Puerto Rico country programs. You will be divided into groups to fulfill specific tasks before, during, and after these site visits. These tasks include: gathering background information on the relevant site and context, conducting a brief literature survey to help the group frame the fieldwork and develop guiding questions, preparing an interview guide, preparing interview questions, direct observation of the site, and reflection on the fieldwork practice. You will be provided a more elaborate prompt for the Collective Fieldwork project at the relevant time in each site.

Mid-term Presentation (10%)

The goal of the mid-term presentation is for you to discuss progress on your comparative research project, to explore how your topic relates to our overall program, to engage collectively in theoretical and analytical discussions, and to share resources. The presentations will be a forum for students to think and work collectively and collaboratively, and to provide feedback and advice to each other on content, ethical concerns, and future research directions. Details of the presentation format and requirements will be provided in the course sessions prior to class 8.

Final Presentation (20%) and Paper (25%)

The final comparative analysis research paper should be 4500 words (maximum, including bibliography, captions, addenda, notes. This also includes roughly 1000-1500 words that form a section for the Political Economy & Environmental History course that establishes a literature review and analytical framework to ground your research paper). The final paper deadline and presentation dates will fall toward the end of program; these dates will be provided as we finalize our schedule for Chile. The paper and presentation should demonstrate original research, clear organization, synthesis and creative use of theoretical and historical readings from classes according to the following requirements:

- The research is comparative, with the argument based on primary and secondary data collected in at least two of the four different countries visited. Ideas are evidenced with data collected during field research and contextualized with references from the assigned and recommended readings.
- Papers should have an argument clear to the reader and built on thematic ideas. Lapses into mere narration or presenting a segmentation of evidence (“in California this happens...in Chile this happens...”) are usually indicative of a poorly formulated thesis and a lack of analysis.
- The paper demonstrates the ability to reflect on the ethical implications of the chosen research topic and methods of fieldwork, as well as the researcher’s own position, cultural values, and assumptions within the data-collecting process.
- Grading of the research paper is qualitative: a sufficient paper that merely meets the parameters of the assignment will fall in the ‘C’ range, good papers get ‘B’s, and superior papers earn ‘A’s. Incomplete or deficient answers may receive ‘D’s or ‘F’s. Criteria I use to evaluate a paper are:
 - Does the paper have a thesis? Is the thesis sufficiently academic? Does it have importance or wider applicability?
 - Has background literature been sufficiently addressed? Does the literature fit the thesis? Has the literature been reasonably integrated? Is there a trajectory to the use of the literature?
 - Are suppositions well founded and logical? Do they support the research question? Is the argument reasonable? Is it interesting?
 - Is sufficient data introduced to provide evidence? Do data support the hypotheses or fit the trajectory of the thesis? Is the evidentiary scope and sequence introduced according to a coherent and logical structure?
 - Do conclusions align with the thesis and the argument? Are they useful, important, and interesting?
 - Is the writing academic in tone? Does the writing provide clarity and organization to the ideas? Is the writing precise; is the terminology used precise? Is the text reasonably free of spelling and grammatical errors?
- Final presentation of the research should demonstrate efficient, engaging and clear oral presentation. More detailed criteria for assessing the presentations will be established in Chile, as well as presentation timings (plan for presenting in the 10-15 minute range).

On topic selection: students will consult the traveling faculty as well as country teams for considering projects that are of intellectual rigor and logistically viable. During the launch we will begin discussing possible research topics and their feasibility to help guide you in your research direction.

Alongside the process of selecting your topic, you will also begin to identify possible resources and approaches for how to gather the necessary evidence to support your overarching thesis. The country teams and local faculty have a wide range of knowledge that will be helpful in each country of our program. On arriving to each new country, Country Coordinators will outline upcoming program components, including guest lectures and site visits. Consider these as potential opportunities for conversations, interviews, and observations. However, though Country Coordinators and their staff are valuable resource persons for you to consult, they are not your research assistants. So be respectful of their time and be aware that it is your responsibility to coordinate any visits or meetings external to the established program activities. Gaining access to participants and sites, or failing to do so, is a part of research and your learning processes.

Finally, within country programs throughout the semester, time will be allocated for self-directed use. You will have many expectations from each of your respective courses, so it is important that you manage your time wisely so that you can make the most of these available time slots. To that end, be reasonable about how much extra-program travel you can accomplish while staying healthy and participating meaningfully in all program elements.

Participation (10%)

Expectations and Policies:

- Participation requires active engagement in discussions, curiosity and interest during classes, meetings, guest lectures, and site visits, a supportive attitude and behavior towards other students, and tolerance and respect for opinions and beliefs different than your own.
- Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and questions in mind for discussion or clarification. Being prepared raises the level of class discussion for everyone. This includes being punctual and prepared for guest lectures and site visits. All students are expected to be present at every program session, with the only exceptions being illness. Unexcused absences and habitual lateness will result in penalties reflected in your participation grade. Please inform staff if you are running late.
- Have assignments completed on schedule and done in accordance to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- Ask questions in class. Be attentive, respectful and engaged with the guest lecturers and site visit hosts. These are often very busy professionals and community leaders who are doing us an honor by meeting with us and deserve your full attention and respect.
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical). Plagiarism or cheating will result in a score of zero for that assignment and could result in additional disciplinary measures as outlined in the Academics section of the SIT Study Abroad Student Handbook.
- Respect differences of opinion (classmates, lecturers, site visit hosts, homestay families). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.
- Be pro-active and flexible and take ownership of your learning experience as individuals and as a group. The experiential model of learning requires that you look forward and back across the

semester. The logistics of our time in each country means that coursework will not always develop in a strictly linear fashion.

- Electronic devices: Generally, the use of phones, tablets and laptops are not permitted during site visits and guest lectures, or In-Country Faculty classes. The use of cell phones during any class is prohibited, unless there is a specific need and request is made in advance. We will discuss the need for the use of tablets or laptops during this course.

Assessment

Proportion of grade:	Components:
Research Project (70%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Proposal (5%) • Research Plan (10%) • Portfolio Review (5%) • Mid-term Presentation (10%) • Final Presentation (15%) • Final Paper (25%)
Collective Fieldwork (20%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Presentation: all students in the group will receive the same grade on their collective presentation.
Participation (10%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation: attending and actively engaging in all course components

Late Work

Due to the structure of our program, with a tightly planned country schedule, there is little time available to make up late work. Assignment deadlines are set with this already in mind. Do not expect to be provided extensions. Deadlines for assignments will be confirmed in class. Late work will be assessed a penalty of a grade step per day late (eg. an A- would drop to a B+ if one day late).

Grading Scale

94-100%	A	Excellent
90-93%	A-	
87-89%	B+	
84-86%	B	Above Average
80-83%	B-	
77-79%	C+	
74-76%	C	Average
70-73%	C-	
67-69%	D+	
64-66%	D	Below Average
below 64	F	Fail

Program Expectations

Participation

IHP is an experiential learning program; you have to show up to have the experience. Students are expected to attend all classes, guest lectures, and field activities unless they have a medical excuse that has been communicated and approved of by IHP staff, faculty, or Fellow. IHP has academic requirements to attend class meetings and field activities. Failure to attend classes or field activities means that a student may not be eligible for credit from their university or could result in program dismissal.

Class Preparation

This program is built upon the strong belief that your experiences result in deep insights and powerful learning. Course assignments are created to facilitate learning opportunities and experiences. Dialogue in class about these insights and participation in these activities is critical. For this reason, your active engagement is very important. As a learning community, each one of us will influence the learning environment. Please take responsibility for your role in this environment and come to class prepared to engage with others in a positive and thought-provoking manner.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is the failure to maintain academic integrity. It includes, but is not limited to, obtaining or giving unauthorized aid on an examination, having unauthorized prior knowledge of the content of an examination, doing work for another student, having work done by another person for the student, and plagiarism. Academic dishonesty can result in severe academic penalty, including failure of the course and/or dismissal from the institution/program.

Plagiarism is the presentation of another person's ideas or product as one's own. Examples of plagiarism are: copying verbatim and without attribution all or parts of another's written work, using phrases, charts, figures, illustrations, computer programs, websites without citing the source; paraphrasing ideas, conclusions or research without citing the source; using all or part of a literary plot, poem, film, musical score, computer program, websites or other artistic product without attributing the work to its creator.

Students can avoid unintentional plagiarism by carefully following accepted scholarly practices. Notes taken for papers and research projects should accurately record sources of material to cited, quoted, paraphrased, or summarized, and research or critical papers should acknowledge these sources in footnotes or by use of footnotes.

Violations of SIT Study Abroad academic integrity policy are handled as violations of the student code of conduct and will result in disciplinary action. Please discuss this with your faculty and staff if you have questions.

General Considerations

- **Show up prepared.** Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- **Complete** assignments on schedule and according to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- **Engage** the lecturer. Ask questions in class. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- **Comply** with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).

- **Respect** differences of opinion (classmates', lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Disability Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.